

## **BELMONT VISION 21 IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE MEETING (VIC)**

**Minutes, January 20, 2005**

Accepted 2/17/05

Members present: Tim Higgins, Matthew Hausmann, Sara Oaklander, Margaret O'Brien, Jennifer Page, Paul Solomon, Barry Winston

Members absent: Victoria Haase, Diane Stafford

Others present: Jennifer Fallon, Delores Keefe

7:10 p.m. Jennifer Page called the meeting to order.

1. **Administrative:** Minutes from January 6, were approved with minor revisions.

2. **Membership:** Jenny Fallon has agreed that Jennifer may ask the Board of Selectmen to appoint Jenny as a member of the Vision Implementation Committee.

3. **Martin Luther King Breakfast:** Members who attended reported that the breakfast was a fine event. The music was very effective at bringing people together. Our Committee was thanked for making calls to previous attendees. One member was there to help clean-up.

**Planning in Belmont:** Much of the remainder of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of Planning in Belmont. Paul Solomon announced that this will be a major issue in the upcoming~Selectmen's meeting of January 31. He will meet with Tim Higgins, Joe Barrell, and Andy McClurg prior to this meeting. On Jan. 31, Paul plans to advocate for two issues:

(a) The Trapelo Road Corridor planning. He wants movement on implementation of the Cecil Group recommendations and wonders how well the MIT students' plan fits/meshes with the Cecil Group Recommendations.

(b) Belmont Center: As the Town Hall complex nears completion and groundbreaking on the old fire station occurs, the Electric Light Dept. building and the old Fire Station will be empty. Belmont has an urgent need to plan for the use of these two older municipal buildings that is consonant with the vision for the Town.

**This topic will be on the agenda for the Selectmen's meeting on January 31<sup>st</sup>.** All VIC members and others are encouraged to attend.

### **Discussion:**

\* Matt Hausmann commended the MIT students for the vision they laid out for Trapelo Rd. Do we have a similar vision for Belmont Center? The old Fire Station is an important priority and could become an anchor for the Center.

\* Jennie Fallon noted that given the VIC's experience in public outreach, perhaps VIC could help promote public discussion and provide information prior to decisions being taken.

\* Jennifer Page asked, What is the process for developing a Vision and a plan for Belmont Center?

\* Sara Oaklander noted that despite the Waverley Fire Station process, the Town has not adopted a planning process that is as inclusive as those sponsored by the VIC.

\* Tim Higgins said that there is a need for advocates within the Town such as from the Board of Selectmen (BOS) and Planning Board (PB) for such a process to exist. In addition, visioning is needed and lots of public input prior to policies being determined.

\* Are the Cecil Group recommendations officially accepted? It was thought that the public and the Planning Board did not actually discuss the final recommendations. The Planning Board accepted the report but didn't really examine the recommendations or its implications. The next step is to go back to the public and ask for input. In general, the public is uneducated and needs a straw man to react to. It is important to showcase recommendations so that people can react. Also, there is a need to demonstrate the process: tasks, timelines, etc., so that the public can be engaged. The Planning Board needs to be key in moving this forward, not just accepting a report. It is important for Belmont boards to frame a process for participation to which the public can respond.

There was some public outreach regarding the Trapelo Road Corridor Study: Andy McClurg advocated for the Cecil Plan and led some public forums about the traffic issues inherent in a redesign of the Corridor. However, members of the business community were misinformed about the plan. Business owners came to a meeting and attacked the ideas McClurg advocated. Since then, McClurg has not advocated.

\* Jennifer Page asked: "How can the VIC assist the planning process?"

\* Paul Solomon suggested that a planning group similar to the Mega Capital Planning Group could be assembled. Its composition might include representatives of: the following:

Traffic Advisory Committee	Belmont Cr. Parking Comm.	Zoning Board of Appeals
Planning Board	Vision Implementation Comm.	Board of Selectmen
BEDPG		

(In such a framework, VIC would serve as a consultative group.)

\* Mega Capital Planning Group as a model? Jenny Fallon suggested that it might be a useful model for how the various boards and departments involved in a group planning project can work together. She offered an historical perspective on Capital Planning Mega Group which grew out of a recognition that we had a crisis about the Town Budget some years ago. Today, we have a similar situation with many projects: Trapelo Road corridor, new uses for old Fire Stations, etc. The boards with differing responsibilities need to work together rather than against each other. The Mega Group included all members of all the affected boards and committees. An important outcome of the Mega Group was that all the groups shared information and worked from the same information.

Jenny pointed to two responsibilities of a Mega Group: (a) Designing a process; and (b) implementation of a plan using the process. She noted what a "mega" planning group would have to look at:

Cecil Group/Corridor plan already "accepted" by the Planning Board; and MIT study.  
Re-use options for the Belmont Center Fire Station and Elec. Light Building.  
Comprehensive look at the Zoning By-Law.

Smart growth proposal (Waverley)  
BEDPG's recommendations.

\* Given all this information, we should use a process to set priorities and move forward with projects. The process should include the following:

First, tell people what we've done in these areas. A large group meeting is needed to discuss the process development. Then identify the thread that binds all these issues. Then see where we should input.

\* Town-wide plan? Concern was expressed that a Master Plan/Long Term Planning Group effort might engender member burn out and is too expensive in terms of both our current financial and human resources. This is especially true if the Group tries to create a Master Plan for all of Belmont rather than focusing on Trapelo Road and Belmont Center. However, Paul Solomon would want its mandate to include South Pleasant St. which links the Center with Trapelo Road.

\* A good starting place is the Cecil Group report which includes recommendations for the whole Town. We also want to see the ways that the MIT students' recommendations mesh with and could enrich the Cecil report. With regard to Trapelo Road, the MIT students presented a vision for all of Trapelo Road while the Cecil Group worked on pieces of Trapelo Road. We need to look at the big picture and then at smaller pieces.

#### **Summary Comments:**

- \* The common information and reports that are available to a Mega Group.
- \* Buy in to the vision in these geographic areas important, and then move ahead tactically.
- \* People don't have a lot of time to spend on a Master Plan
- \* Belmont Center should be the focus.
- \* VIC can help other boards with the public outreach process.
- \* Many groups are on parallel courses that could be more effective if coordinated.
- \* Disappointment that planning for Trapelo Road and Belmont Center has come to a halt.
- \* Designing a process that was structured under the Board of Selectmen with strict timelines is advisable.

**Environmental Initiative** Jan Kruse has agreed to chair an environmental group. She will have her first meeting on February 9, 2005 at the Chenery Middle School.

6. **Mass Tech Collaborative** Tim McCarthy and the Electric Light Dept. have agreed to work with the Mass Tech Collaborative to create a Belmont task force.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret C. O'Brien  
Secretary Pro-Tem